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MEXICAN MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO PASSPORT FRAUD

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE: United States Attorney Tom Colantuono reports that 25-year-old Juan Ramirez of 25 Eagle Ave, Patterson, New Jersey, pleaded guilty today in U.S. District Court in Concord to one count of passport fraud.

Ramirez, who is a citizen of Mexico, was indicted last November for attempting to obtain a United States passport by fraud. He falsely stated on his United States Passport Application that he was born in Puerto Rico, and he attached a counterfeit birth certificate to his Application that purported to show that he was born in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. Ramirez' passport application was received and reviewed by the National Passport Center located in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where the fraud was discovered.

Commenting on this case, United States Attorney Tom Colantuono said, "A United States Passport is the most coveted travel document in the world. It immediately identifies the holder as a United States citizen to the rest of the world. Efforts to defraud the United States into issuing a passport to someone who is not entitled to receive it cannot and will not be tolerated."

Ramirez is scheduled to be sentenced at the United States District Courthouse in Concord on November 17, 2003. He faces a possible maximum sentence of ten years and a possible maximum fine of \$250,000.

This case was investigated by the Diplomatic Security Service of the U.S. State Department. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Helen White Fitzgibbon.